

*You are a member of your school's Social Welfare Club. This year, the club is going to focus on the plight of the elderly in Hong Kong.*

*Write an essay for the club's newsletter. Discuss the problems that the elderly in Hong Kong are facing, what can be done to help the elderly, and think about what society, including the elderly themselves, can do to help solve these problems.*

### **The Plight of the Elderly**

Recently, the United Nations has conducted a survey which shows that the number of people in Hong Kong aged 60 or above will be doubled. The rising number of the elderly causes many problems to the society. In a bid to deal with the existing situation and give appropriate assistance to the elderly to escape from the plight, we should closely examine the problems.

First and foremost, they are facing the problems of poverty which is definitely a pressing problem. As we know that the elderly have retired for many years, they have not got any stable income each month except annuity, which is surely not enough to meet the high living cost of Hong Kong. Those who have children may not encounter this problem as their children may financially support them monthly. However, it is obvious that only a small group of the elderly is so lucky and blessed. Yet, many of them are living under the line of poverty.

Another problem is the lack of appropriate care for the elderly. It is in no doubt that many old people stay at home alone when their children go to work at daytime. Worse still, they live alone when their children get married. A number of them are physically unable as their physical strength has been deteriorating gradually when they become older. They easily lose balance or even stumble over, which greatly imposes a terrible threat to their lives causing irrevocable consequences.

The last problem that we should never overlook is loneliness. Hong Kong is a bustling and hustling place, people need to work around the clock at all time. It is almost inevitable that the elderly are left unattended. Not only are they unable to look after themselves, but also to find a soul mate to talk to when they feel lonely. It is not uncommon to hear that many cases of elderly suicide are the results of unbearable loneliness and emptiness of life.

In order to improve the above situation, the elderly themselves, their children and the government should closely cooperate to tackle the problems at their roots.

At the government level, a comprehensive elderly healthcare scheme should be launched immediately, which aims at providing extra subsidies to the elderly to support their living. In particular, extra subsidies should be allocated to the elderly for their annual body check and

medication. As health problems are inevitable, they should be given enough financial assistance to cater for their needs.

At family level, their children should visit their parents regularly and care about them more frequently. Giving financial support is absolutely not the only way to show their love and care. Instead, they should spend more regular time on their parents, understanding their needs and communicating with them to build up an intimate relationship. As a result, the elderly can feel the love and live psychologically strongly.

Though the support from the government and the families is important, the elderly should also help themselves escape the plight. They should be more open-minded and put effort to join different social activities ranging from outdoor activities to indoor activities organised by community centres. Through the activities, there is no doubt that they can make new friends. Better still, they stretch themselves and build up their strength by taking part in outdoor activities such as hiking. They can also redevelop and rebuild their life goals by taking part in charity activities such as flag-selling. The more activities they join, the better life they can enjoy.

Ageing is a matter of fact that no one can escape. However, if the elderly can jump out of the box and no longer confine themselves to a flat, they will certainly find that their lives can be far better than they can ever imagine. Surely, with the external support from the government and the families, they are able to restart a meaning life and no longer grumble over their plight.